

# Bush plans to reduce covert CIA operations

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Washington—George Bush, the new head of the Central Intelligence Agency, said yesterday the agency is going to cut back on clandestine foreign operations like those spotlighted in a year of congressional investigations.

He indicated doubts about the secret course pursued in Angola in support of anti-Soviet factions and implied that President Ford's intelligence reforms would prevent a future CIA involvement like that in the overthrow of Chile's Marxist President Salvador Allende.

Interviewed on the NBC Meet the Press program, Mr. Bush defended the administration's new secrecy proposals, designed to protect intelligence data from unauthorized disclosure. The proposals have been criticized by some as potential means for covering up future abuses.

Under Mr. Ford's reforms, the only kind of covert foreign operations that are banned are "political assassination" attempts. Other covert activities have ranged from pumping money into anti-Communist political parties in Europe to running a secret war in Laos in the 1960's.

Since James R. Schlesinger was CIA director, before William E. Colby, whom Mr. Bush has just replaced, efforts have been made to concentrate more on the main job of gathering

and analyzing foreign intelligence.

"Frankly, I think you'll find less use of covert activity," Mr. Bush said yesterday. "I think there is an awareness now that it's much better to approve things in public."

That comment came after Mr. Bush had described the secret Angolan operation as a demonstration of American will in the face of the Soviet Union-Cuban intervention, and a questioner had said it was an odd concept that "we should demonstrate [will] in secret."

"I can't totally argue with your point," Mr. Bush replied. "I think it's a very, very valid observation." He could not say in retrospect that open debate on the Angolan operation would have been wrong.

Mr. Bush said the CIA must be able to undertake covert operations so that the United States has an option "somewhere between sending in a battalion of marines and doing nothing." But, said the new director of central intelligence,

"to the degree my judgment counts on covert [operations], we're going to be very, very careful."

Asked what he would do about an order like the one former President Nixon gave Richard Helms, then CIA director, in September, 1970, to encourage a military coup in Chile, Mr. Bush replied, "I wouldn't do it."

Enlarging on that answer, he said the new intelligence reforms would prevent such a loose arrangement as formerly existed. Decisions on covert actions are to be institutionalized at Cabinet level and "now nobody can say, oh, I wasn't there or I got a phone call [about what was going to happen]. Everybody sits around and makes a decision of this nature."

In the end, Mr. Bush said, it comes down "to judgment, to integrity" on the part of those running the intelligence establishment. Laws cannot guarantee there will be perfection and no abuses, he said.

He was questioned closely on Mr. Ford's plan to protect secrets about intelligence

sources and methods, and about other intelligence matters as well, by having federal employees and contractors sign agreements against unauthorized disclosures and by providing civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Questions centered on the issue of covering up abuses in the guise of secrets. Disclosures of CIA domestic spying and surveillance operations led to the year-long investigations of the agency.

"We want to be darn sure the sins of the past are eliminated, but equally sure that this intelligence system can operate with secrecy in the future," Mr. Bush said. He said domestic spying and electronic surveillance are specifically barred under the new rules.

A questioner noted there are some exceptions, permitting certain CIA domestic operations linked to foreign intelligence gathering, and asked how exposure of wrongdoing could be expected with oath-taking and criminal statutes standing as deterrents.

Mr. Bush called that a "very good question," but appeared confident that new executive branch oversight rules and similar actions expected from Congress would provide the necessary safeguards "against the kind of abuses that offended you and that offended me."